

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 INRE-00

CIAE-00 SP-02 EUR-08 SSO-00 /039 W

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O 141900Z APR 77

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9771

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 GABORONE 0855

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UK, RH, SF, BC

SUBJECT: FONSEC OWEN'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SERETSE KHAMA

1. SUMMARY: DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY JOHN GRAHAM BRIEFED ME LATE TODAY ON FONSEC DAVID OWEN'S NEARLY TWO-HOUR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SERETSE KHAMA. GRAHAM SAID THE ONLY "MODIFICATION" OF OWEN'S PITCH WAS THAT HE REPEATED TO PRES KHAMA THE IDEA FIRST RAISED WITH IAN SMITH YESTERDAY, NAMELY THAT "THERE MIGHT BE MERIT IN HAVING SEPARATE CONSULTATIONS -- A KIND OF DISPERSED CONFERENCE, UNLIKE GENEVA WITH ITS PROTOCOL, SEATING AND OTHER PROBLEMS." GRAHAM DID NOT MENTION SPECIFIC REACTION FROM PRES KHAMA TO THIS PROPOSAL BUT REPORTS THAT KHAMA RAISED QUESTIONS ABOUT (A) TRUE INTENTIONS OF SMITH AND THE RHODESIAN NATIONALISTS; (B) WHAT U.S. "CONTRIBUTION" WOULD BE "IF U.S. WERE INVOLVED" IN CONFERENCE; (C) WHETHER OWEN SERIOUSLY THOUGHT SOMETHING WOULD COME OF HIS EFFORT; AND (D) HOW THE INTERIM WOULD BE ORGANIZED BEFORE CONSTITUTION CAME INTO FORCE. END SUMMARY.

2. UK HICOM TELEPHONED TODAY TO INVITE ME TO DEBRIEFING BY JOHN GRAHAM ON FONSEC OWEN'S MEETING WITH PRES SERETSE KHAMA. GRAHAM BEGAN BY NOTING THAT OWEN HAD REPEATED TODAY THE "MODIFICATION" FIRST TRIED OUT ON IAN SMITH YESTERDAY, NAMELY, THE IDEA OF "SEPARATE CONSULTATIONS, A KIND OF DIS-

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PERSED CONFERENCE". OWEN HAD PUT IT IN TERMS OF AVOIDING SUCH PROBLEMS AS SEATING AND PROTOCOL THAT IMPEDED GENEVA CONFERENCE. BEING SEPARATED MIGHT MAKE IT EASIER FOR PARTIES TO TAKE DIFFERENT VIEWS. GRAHAM SAID IT WOULD MEAN PEOPLE LIKE HIM WOULD CONSULT WITH PARTICIPANTS DURING THE DAY AND IN THE EVENING SIT DOWN AND DRAFT ARTICLES OF WHAT APP-EARED TO BE A "FAIR, DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTION". GRAHAM SAID

SMITH'S REACTION WAS TO ASK OWEN TO BE SURE TO TALK IT OVER WITH ZUPO. HE DID NOT REPORT ANY SPECIFIC REACTION ON THIS POINT FROM PRES KHAMA.

3. QUESTIONS. PRES KHAMA'S FIRST REACTION TO OWEN'S GENERAL PRESENTATION WAS REPORTEDLY TO AGREE ON IMPORTANCE OF PRIMIN VORSTER. KHAMA THEN RAISED TWO "DIFFICULTIES": (A) HE WAS "STILL CONCERNED" ABOUT WHETHER SMITH HAS AGREED TO THE CONCEPT OF MAJORITY RULE. (AREN'T WE ALL, ASKED GRAHAM RHETORICALLY, OFF THE RECORD); AND (B) WHETHER THE RHODESIAN NATIONALISTS WANT A DEMOCRATIC ELECTION. TWO OR THREE YEARS AGO THIS MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE CASE, KHAMA IS QUOTED AS SAYING. "NOW NKOMO AND MUGABE ARE PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN SEIZING POWER FOR THEMSELVES." KHAMA ADDED NATIONALISTS ARE NOW "MORE INDEPENDENT, BETTER ARMED AND MORE NUMEROUS" THAN BEFORE. "NKOMO HAS MORE ARMED MEN THAN I DO", KHAMA REPORTEDLY ADDED WITH SARDONIC SMILE.

4. U.S. ROLE. KHAMA SAID UK ROLE WAS ACCEPTED BY ALL. HE ASSUMED (ACCORDING TO GRAHAM) THAT U.S. WAS NOT INVOLVED WHAT WOULD U.S. "CONTRIBUTE"? OWEN REPLIED U.S. WOULD GIVE "ENORMOUS PRESTIGE AND INFLUENCE", THAT UK WAS "NOT PREPARED TO RISK IT ALONE". NEITHER UK NOR U.S. WAS THINKING OF SENDING TROOPS. BUT OWEN TOLD KHAMA U.S. HAD INFLUENCE WITH OTHER COUNTRIES AND THERE WAS IN ADDITION THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION'S "COMMITMENT" AS REPRESENTED INTER ALIA BY REPEAL OF THE BYRD AMENDMENT. GRAHAM SAID KHAMA (AND OTHERS) THEN PURSUED THE QUESTION AS TO WHAT UK AND U.S. WOULD DO " IF SMITH IS RECALCITRANT". WOULD YOU (U.S. AND UK) "TIGHTEN

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THE SQUEEZE ON SMITH?" OWEN REPORTEDLY REPLIED AFFIRMATIVELY WE WOULD DO SO "AS PART OF OUR JOINT EFFORT". GRAHAM CITED OWEN AS AGAIN EVOKING AT THIS POINT THE "EVIDENCE OF U.S. SINCERITY" IN ITS COMMITMENT AND "ENORMOUS IMPORTANCE OF REPEAL OF BYRD AMENDMENT. GRAHAM SAID OWEN SPOKE OF U.S. AND UK "TIGHTENING TOGETHER" -- A POINT, GRAHAM SAID, THAT HAD "GOT THROUGH TO SMITH". LATTER HAD REPORTEDLY URGED OWEN NOT TO TALK ABOUT THIS POINT IN PUBLIC BECAUSE HIS (SMITH'S) "CONSTITUENTS" WOULD BE TURNED OFF BY THE "THREAT". (A FAIR POINT, GRAHAM INTERJECTED.)

5. NATIONALIST REACTION. PRIVATE SECRETARY LEGWAILA ASKED OWEN IF HE THOUGHT NKOMO AND MUGABE WOULD ABIDE BY A MUZOREWA ELECTION VICTORY; LEGWAILA DOUBTED IT. THEN WHAT? OWEN REPORTEDLY AGREED THIS WAS A "REAL RISK" BUT FELT THERE WAS A "GREATER CHANCE THAT A LEGITIMATE ZIMBABWEAN GOVERNMENT WOULD BE SUPPORTED. IT WOULD BE BETTER THAN IF MUZOREWA WERE ELECTED UNDER A REFERENDUM BECAUSE, AMONG OTHER REASONS, THERE WOULD BE "WORLD SUPPORT" FOR RESULTS OF THE ELECTION.

(VORSTER REPORTEDLY HAD MADE THE SAME POINT.) PRES KHAMA THEN REPORTEDLY ASKED IF THE UK WAS GOING THROUGH A "PROCESS IN ORDER TO SAY "WE HAVE DONE OUR BEST" -- OR DID THE UK THINK IT COULD BRING IT OFF". HE ACKNOWLEDGED "IMMENSE DIFICULTIES: POLARIZATION OF THINKING ON BOTH SIDES, ECONOMIC LOSSES, POLITICAL TROUBLES." BUT OWEN IS SAID TO HAVE ADDED THAT "EVEN IF THE CHANCES ARE NOT THAT GOOD, WE SHOULD TRY TO DO IT BECAUSE OF THE UGLY ALTERNATIVE OF ARMED CONFLICT AND REPERCUSSIONS IN THE REGION".

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6. INTERIM GOVERNMENT. LEGWAILA THEN RAISED A QUESTION ABOUT THE AUTHORITY OF THE INTERIM GOVERNMENT. OWEN CONTRASTED HIS PROPOSED INTERIM GOVERNMENT WITH THE EARLIER IDEAS ON GROUNDS THAT "WE WOULD KNOW WHAT WE'RE GOING FOR" UNDER HIS PLAN; "IT'S NOT A PIG IN A POKE". HE REPORTEDLY OUTLINED THE SCENARIO COUNTING BACK FROM AN ASSURED INDEPENDENCE DAY (I-DAY) WHICH WOULD GIVE ELECTIONS (I MINUS 90, FOR EXAMPLE) REAL SUBSTANCE AND LEAVE THE "MECHANICAL" QUESTIONS AS SIMULTANEOUSLY PHASING THE NEW REGIME IN AND THE OLD REGIME OUT. OWEN REFERRED TO POSSIBLE ROLE OF "UK COMMISSIONER" AND PERHAPS A "COMMONWEALTH FORCE". THERE WILL BE MANY PROBLEMS AND ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS TO MEET THEM. OWEN DID NOT MINIMIZE PROBLEMS, BUT BELIEVED IT ESSENTIAL TO MOVE FORWARD.

7. OTHER. IN PASSING GRAHAM MADE THREE OTHER NOTEWORTHY POINTS: (A) BOTSWANA DID NOT WANT MORE THAN OBSERVER STATUS IN ANY FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE; (B) NKOMO AND MUGABE HAD TOLD OWEN THEY ALONE EXPECTED TO BE INVITED ON RHODESIAN NATIONALIST SIDE; THEY WANTED "NO BISHOPS ABOUT. THEY CAN PRAY"; (C) NEVERTHELESS, OWEN FELT MUGABE HAD "MOVED TOWARD

ATTENDING" A CONFERENCE. MEETING WITH KHAMA CONTINUED LONGER THAN EXPECTED. IT LEFT THE PARTICIPANTS (WITH WHOM I WAS ABLE TO EXCHANGE WORDS) IN A RELATIVELY BUOYANT MOOD.

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8. NOTE: IN RESPONSE TO MY QUESTION, GRAHAM SAID OWEN TOLD SMITH UK WOULD CHAIR THE CONFERENCE, THE U.S. WOULD "CO-SPONSOR" IT.

9. DEPARTMENT REPEAT AS DESIRED. THIS REPORT IS RATHER FULL AT GRAHAM'S SUGGESTION.

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